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LEGEND OF THE SNAKE ORDER OF THE MOQUIS,
AS TOLD BY OUTSIDERS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 11, 1888.

To the General Editor of the Journal of American Folk-Lore :

DEAR SIR,— The accompanying "Legend of the Snake Order of the Moquis" was shown to me some years ago by Mr. A. M. Stephen, of Keam's Cañon, Arizona, who gave me permission to copy it, but gave no instructions in regard to its publication. Finding in the JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLK-LORE a suitable medium for its publication, I take the liberty of offering it without further consultation with the writer, feeling confident that my action will meet with his approval.

As for its authenticity, I will say that Mr. Stephen has lived for years in the neighborhood of the Moquis, meeting members of the tribe almost daily, and that he is a conscientious and painstaking student of Indian lore. He expressed to me some doubts as to the genuine antiquity of certain meteorological imagery in the story, and even went so far as to put interrogation points after those passages which allude to "liquid light," robes of "moonbeams," etc. ; but having found in the myths of other Pueblo Indians, and in the myths of the neighboring Navajos, — a less civilized race than the Moquis, — analogous fancies, I had no hesitation in striking out his question-marks.

In his title, Mr. Stephen admits this to be the tale as told by those who do not belong to the sacred order. In its general form and much of its detail, it closely resembles rite-myths of the Navajos, and, judging from my knowledge of the latter, I am inclined to believe that the only important point in which it would be found to differ from the tale as told by the initiated would be in its omission of the strictly esoteric part; that is, in the account of the mysteries which the Snake people are supposed to have imparted to the prophet White-Corn. That such mysteries were taught is only hinted at in the legend. What the nature of the mysteries is may be surmised by reading Capt. John G. Bourke's work on the "Snake-Dance of the Moquis," where the awful ceremonies of the Snake Order are so graphically described.

Very truly yours,

WASHINGTON MATTHEWS.

MANY years ago, when the people were greatly scattered over the land, there lived in a house seven brothers, who were said to be the best of all men then living, for they did not of nights interfere with others, nor did they dwell with women. They were named Red-Corn, Blue-Corn, Yellow-Corn, White-Corn, Green-Corn, Spotted-Corn, and Black-Corn. None of them married until the youngest, Black-Corn, had attained the age of manhood. He was then told by his older brothers to take a wife. This displeased him, for among all the women of his tribe there was none he liked. He grew sad, and said he would go away, and not return until after he had found a wife. He started upon his journey, taking with him only four plume-sticks and a bag of sacred meal. After journeying many days, until nearly dead with hunger and thirst, he came to a large lake which lay to the west of his own house. He did not drink from

this lake, but from a stream of water which issued from a hill at a little distance from the lake. Next day, when he awoke, he went down to the side of the water, and said to Daw-wa, the sun-chief: "Oh, Daw-wa! father! I have been sent from my home, and my heart is heavy. I am weary, father; give me rest, give me a home, where my heart will once more be filled with the joyous song of the lark,¹ and not with the sad song of the dove."

Daw-wa heard his prayer, and told him to tie his four sticks together and place them on the water, which done the sticks became great logs and the feathers a shade (after the manner of an umbrella). He was then directed to gather certain roots, after eating which he would not be hungry for a long while. He was told that in four days he was to sail away upon this raft, and after he started he was not to land until asked to come ashore by a snake, whose name was Wapa Tcua (Big Rattlesnake). On the fourth morning, before sunrise, he was awakened by the rocking motion of his raft, and after the sun had risen he looked around, but could see no land. He was afraid, but Oman comforted him, assuring him of safety. At sunset, one evening, after his voyage had continued several days, a buzzard came and told him that in two or three days he would see land, and cautioned him not to be frightened at anything he should see or hear. At the end of three days land came in view. He sailed two days in sight of land, and at sunset on the fourth day the raft was thrown upon the shore. It began to grow small, compelling him to get ashore. In the morning, Daw-wa told him to pick up his plume-sticks, which had now assumed their natural size. Daw-wa then directed him to travel to the south and west, telling him that he would be met by an old man, who would guide him to a running stream where the Big Snake kept watch, to whom he should give the plume-sticks and pouch of meal. He began his journey at noon, and night came on while he was climbing a mountain. He continued his journey in the early morning as soon as the star rose, and when the sun rose a very old man, leaning on a stick, came from behind a rock. This old man had eyes and ears, but had neither mouth nor nose; he could not speak, but with his stick, which was shaped like a crook, he seized the young man by the neck, and led him along, stopping at intervals to let his companion rest, for the old man almost ran, so fast was his gait. At sunset he stopped, and by signs told the young man that on the morrow his part of the journey would be done; that he had been a long time awaiting the young man's arrival. The old man said he was glad of his arrival, for now he (the old man) could go home and die in peace. While the old man was making signs, he was struck by a flash of lightning and rendered unconscious.

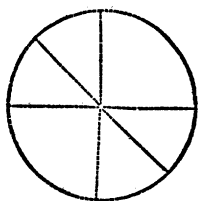
¹ Probably the Western meadow-lark.

The young man's name was Kwe-teat-ri-yi, White-Corn.¹ White-Corn was afraid, and started to run away, but the old man opened his eyes, and called him by name, telling him to get a piece of black rock, lying near, and with it cut the skin on his (the old man's) face, beginning at a point between the eyes, and cutting downward the length of one of the plume-sticks, then cutting across the face the same distance. White-Corn did as he was directed, and immediately the old man became a young man. In the morning they resumed their journey in high glee, singing and telling each other of their homes. At noon they stopped to rest, and the young old man dug a hole in the sand, and, placing one of White-Corn's plume-sticks in it, he began to sing and dance, and the hole filled with water, from which they drank, and then resumed their journey. At sunset they came to the top of a hill, from which White-Corn saw the long-expected stream; so, when he spoke of it, he turned to look at his companion, but the latter had vanished. During the night White-Corn was afraid. At daylight he resumed his march, and got to the stream before sunrise. He sprinkled meal upon the water, and, hearing a peculiar sound in the grass, he turned round and saw a tremendous snake coming toward him, with head raised several feet above ground, its skin shining like beautiful rocks [gems?]. The snake halted at a little distance from him, and began to talk, making inquiry as to where he came from and where he was going; but especially questioning to ascertain whether he was trustworthy. By the direction of the snake, he again threw his remaining plume-sticks into the stream, and, as before, they immediately became a raft. He was directed to get upon the raft, and remain until noon of the fourth day. After this four days' voyage he would reach a hill, which he was to climb, and would then receive further instructions. He accordingly got upon the raft, and it at once began to move rapidly off, much faster than a horse could run; he was frightened, and longed to jump off upon the river bank, but he feared injury: so he sat still and gazed in wonder until night, when he watched the stars. In this way he continued until noon of the fourth day.

He was startled on the fourth day by seeing an immense rock in front, blocking up the entire passage of the river. While he was yet thinking how he could save himself, his raft was suddenly lifted by the roaring water, and he and it were thrown high up on the hill, beside the rock. He lay there, bruised and trembling, for a long while, and pondering over what course to pursue, until he fell asleep. When he awoke in the morning the sun was well up, and he hastened to climb the hill, the summit of which he reached at sunset. He stood looking at a rock partly buried in the sand, and as he continued to ob-

¹ The name changes without explanation.

serve it a snake's head protruded from beneath. He sprinkled sacred meal, and placed his plume-sticks before the snake, which coiled around them, and breathed upon each separate feather. The snake then returned beneath the rock, and directed him to proceed with certain ceremonies.



As directed, White-Corn placed the plume-sticks in front of the snake, then sprinkled corn-meal in such a manner as to describe a circle, then in the area of this circle he sprinkled meal in three straight lines, as shown here. These three lines he named the points whence the rain and winds come.

The snake was well pleased with this conduct, and he concluded not to wait for morning, but to take White-Corn at once into the presence of the great snake-chief, and let him see what the young man did. The rock was suddenly lifted up, and a large opening was exposed. The snake told him to follow quickly, as it was growing dark and cold, and that, although the path was short, it was very rough, and in the dark would be attended by many falls. White-Corn immediately followed the snake, and in a little while after getting into this cavern a mighty noise like thunder was heard. The snake told him not to fear, as the noise was caused by rocks falling down to close up the entrance through which they had just come. This was to prevent any one gaining entrance except those selected, and to prevent the escape of those who had entered. They went on until they heard the sound of falling water and beautiful music, filling the heart full of dreams of beautiful women bathing in streams of liquid light. Suddenly his eyes were dazzled by a great light, which disclosed, standing against the sides of a spacious cavern, men and women, clad on their right with sunbeams, and on their left with moonbeams. In the centre were many maidens, dancing and tying each other with ribbons of fleecy clouds; these were clothed with the stolen rays of the stars and the spray of dashing waters. In the midst of the throng sat an old man, looking angrily at White-Corn.

While enjoying the scene, he was suddenly interrupted, and all of his happy thoughts spread like snow before the gale. The old man addressed him, saying that for many days he and his children had been watching in the east for the approach of him who was to break apart the rocks which held them from the sight of the sun and the beautiful world; for the approach of him who was to impart to them a new life, but who was to go through the ordeal of the Snake Order before being released or releasing others from the dark and lonely life. After many things had been told him, he was led by a snake up to the falling water; the snake then directed him to cast his clothing

aside and bathe in it. After bathing, he was moving off from the water, but his foot was drawn back; then he noticed for the first time that all of the others had a peculiar skin, like a snake's skin, and that he himself was being enveloped with a similar covering. He was then brought before the old man again, and told to get something to eat, and to choose a maiden for a sweetheart. He was unable to make a choice, and asked the old man to select one for him. The old man, reaching back, took hold of a cloudy substance, and began pulling, when there emerged from it a beautiful girl called "Bright Eyes," who was given to White-Corn for his wife. As directed, he followed her and got food. It is unknown how long he stayed in this house, but it was long enough for him to learn all the songs and ceremonials pertaining to the Snake Order.

One day, while all the people were present before the old man, White-Corn told them that he had been with them for a long while, and the time had now come for him to return to his own people; that his people were calling for him; that, while he was enjoying plenty, his brothers were doubtless suffering: hence he proposed to take his wife and start for his home. The people all laughed at him, but he said, "Never mind; the same god that brought me will show me the return path." All the inhabitants of the cave were sad except White-Corn and the old man, who were together oftener than formerly, and were in very secret confidences. One day (how they distinguished day from night is not told) White-Corn was seen to take a bunch of feathers from a long rope hanging from the ceiling. He tied the feathers to a short stick. From a peg in the wall he took a stick with two feathers fastened to it. He gave the bunch of feathers to his wife. He bade good-bye to all the people, and the old man took him by a secret path to the earth's surface. The old man, wishing White-Corn a speedy journey, returned to his cave. White-Corn asked his wife if she could tell him the direction in which his home lay; she said that when the sun came up she would be able to tell, as one of the *Fits-ki*, or rays, pointed directly to the home of his people. Next day, at sunrise, she pointed to a large mound, and said that from the top of it the mountains that were near his home could be seen. He ran to the top of this mound, so glad was he to get away from the constant glare of the magical light, and to think that in a few days he would again see his brothers and friends. They travelled fast for four days; on the fifth day the road led through such rough hills they were forced to turn toward the south. They found a well-travelled trail leading to water, around which were houses and places to keep sheep or horses,—peculiar houses, too, almost round and very high, in which were found many strange vessels and other utensils made of clay and horn; also fun-

nel-shaped baskets, designed to be carried on the back. They made but a short halt in these places, fearing that the people who built them might return and harm or kill them. So they kept going, until one morning, having ascended a very high mountain, the smoke of fires was seen in the valley. Telling his wife to keep a little way behind, White-Corn went towards the fires, the first of which he reached at sunset. He found there his uncle and cousin, who had been searching for him, but, deeming him lost forever, were now on their return home. White-Corn told his adventures, and brought his wife to them. After a few days' travel they all reached home.

At this time there was a great drought prevailing, and it was observed that whenever Tcua-wuti (White-Corn's wife) came before the altar and sprinkled meal rain was sure to follow. So they called upon her husband to give them soup, whereby they, too, might invoke the rain-god of his wife's country. But she said No: not until a son was born to her could the altar of her rain-god be raised in a strange land. After there had been a severe storm, it was observed that Tcua-wuti was with child, and this caused great rejoicing among the people, for they wished her to bear a boy who would become their rain-chief. When the time came for her to bear her child, White-Corn went away with her to a high mesa on the west of the village. After an absence of seven days they returned to the villages, bringing with them her offspring, consisting of five snakes. This enraged the people so that they would have killed them all, but an old man, who was standing by, said, "No, I will be their father; come and live with me." He took them to his home, and that night the people were startled by loud and strange cries coming from this old man's house; a great smoke issued from the doorway and other rents, where people on the outside could look in. No one but the old man, his wife, and one son, beside White-Corn, knew what took place in that house during the night, for the next day the old man went off to the valley. In three days, Tcua-wuti took her snake children and the old man, and went into the valley. In the afternoon the old man came back alone, but Tcua-wuti has never been seen again.

The Mi-shong-i-ni-vi legend differs from this, in that, instead of the plume-sticks becoming a raft, White-Corn takes eight willow branches and ties them together with grass, while the plume-sticks become a guide and sail to his unwieldy craft.

All of the Moki villages have the Snake Order, but, unlike the other secret organizations, there are no fraternal feelings.

A. M. Stephen.